

# **State of Tennessee**

## ***Governor's Web Publishing Policy***

### **Introduction**

The State of Tennessee operates an official Web site - [www.TN.GOV](http://www.TN.GOV) - to provide information to and services for Tennesseans and others.

At the direction of the Governor's Office, the Office for Information Resources or its vendor shall maintain the state's official Web Portal. This includes the Portal main page, secondary Portal pages and certain other pages.

State agencies and departments shall maintain their own main and secondary pages in accordance with this Web Publishing Policy and its related guides for style and content.

Each agency or department's communications officer shall work with the department's Web publisher to maintain the department's Web presence at the direction of the commissioner of the department or the responsible authority in the agency or other entity and shall reflect the priorities of this administration.

Web publishers and communications staff will work together to ensure each agency or department's Web site is current and helpful to the citizens of Tennessee. The Governor's Office reserves the right to review all Web pages to ensure consistency.

This policy is intended for communications managers/public information officers and those who publish and maintain content on the state Web site.

### **Goals**

1. Effectively serve Tennesseans and other constituents with useful and easy to access information and services, providing access for as many users and devices as possible.
2. Effectively and efficiently promote the initiatives of the current administration through its Portal and Web presence.
3. Promote a positive impression of the State of Tennessee with a unified and compelling look, and promote ease of use with intuitive usage conventions and optimizations.
4. Present state government as a seamless entity.

### **Responsibilities and Contacts**

1. Governor's Communications Office - Under the direction of the Governor's Communication Director, GCO shall be responsible for overseeing the content of all Executive Branch department and agency Web pages.

2. Office for Information Resources - Under the direction of the state's Chief Information Officer, OIR will maintain the state's Web infrastructure, manage the associated contractors and contracts and facilitate the technical side of the Portal across all Executive Branch departments and agencies.
3. TN.GOV Steering Committee - The TN.GOV Steering Committee is made up of representatives from the Governor's Communication Office, OIR and its vendor NIC Inc. to oversee all changes and additions to the Portal. The committee has final say on all updates, changes and modifications according to guidelines established in this document.
4. State Departments and Agencies - State departments and agencies shall be responsible for maintaining their Web sites according to the Governor's Web Publishing Policy.

Governor's Communications Office - (615) 741-3763  
Office for Information Resources - (615) 253-2931  
NIC Inc. - (615) 313-0300

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### I. Seamless Government

#### A. Domain Names

The domain names approved for marketing the State of Tennessee's Web site are [www.TN.GOV](http://www.TN.GOV), [www.Tennessee.GOV](http://www.Tennessee.GOV) and the applicable addresses for state agencies such as [www.Tennessee.GOV/revenue](http://www.Tennessee.GOV/revenue).

Exceptions may be made for certain promotional URLs but must be approved by the Governor's Office and OIR by completing a Domain Name Exception Request Form. While other domain names are still accessible, they should not be openly publicized.

#### B. Template

Refer to the agency template for layout and design requirements for the home page. The search button in the upper left column will search [www.TN.GOV](http://www.TN.GOV).

#### C. Standard Page Requirements

All pages will follow the template given to each department including layout and color palette choices. Color choices are detailed in the associated Style Guide.

**HEADER:** All pages should include the TN.GOV identifier in the top left quadrant, followed by the department or agency and commissioner/chairman name to the right of TN.GOV. Below TN.GOV, all pages will include the search box followed by user-based navigation. All pages should include the header as determined by the TN.GOV Steering Committee.

**FOOTER:** The footer will be uniform on all pages with portal links and agency contact information. The portal links will appear on top of the agency contact information and will be determined by the Governor's Communications Office. The footer shall include the following information: Agency name, Location, Address, Telephone number, and e-mail address. For more information on the content that goes within the footer, please see the Content Guide Appendix.

**LEFT COLUMN:** The top left column will be uniform on all pages with a search button and navigation links. Agencies will be allowed to choose colors for the navigation based upon the palette colors detailed in the style guide. All colors must follow a specific palette and agencies may not mix and match within color palettes. The lower left column will have the Related Topics (optional) box.

**RIGHT COLUMN:** The right column will be uniform on all pages as determined by the Governor's Communications Office. Included will be your agency's logo (optional), a graphic link to the Governor's home page, TN.GOV Promo, Agency Promo (optional), Featured sites (optional), Agency services (optional), TN.GOV(optional) services.

**D. Non-Standard Pages**

Mandatory layout can be exempted for applications and/or standalone pages that contain no navigation menus. Standalone pages are considered to be an end point in the site and contain no navigational links required to point to additional pages. It is recommended these pages are used sparingly and that such pages be a pop-up window.

Examples of standalone pages include: tables of data, maps, photos.

**II. Getting to Information**

**A. Search**

The search feature is prominently displayed in the left column of the Web pages, as reflected in the template. To facilitate ease of finding information, the search button will default to searching across all of TN.GOV.

**B. Site Maps**

To assist with navigation, each page should have a site map listed in the header.

**C. Frames**

Any use of frames must be approved by the TN.GOV Steering Committee. Frames can be an obstacle to two major goals of the Web site: presenting government as a seamless entity and allowing users to easily locate information and services. Frames complicate the ability to lead users efficiently to state content because one cannot link to specific pages within frames.

**D. Portable Document Format**

Portal document formats, or PDFs, should be used sparingly. Most Web content, including news releases, should be in HTML format. PDFs are appropriate for online versions of printed forms or publications, but HTML format should be used wherever possible. When a PDF is posted, the user should be notified that the link leads to an Adobe Acrobat PDF file, especially if the file is very large. While most users do have Acrobat reader, they may not want to wait for the program and the file to open.

**E. Search Engine Optimization**

All agencies will be required to utilize search engine optimization as detailed in the style guide. Agencies may be asked to make changes to optimize searches at the request of the TN.GOV Steering Committee.

When posting press releases or other information on Web pages, key words should be considered and used to make search features easier to use. These may be part of an active marketing campaign or recommended by the Governor's Communication's Office. Searchable key words may need to be added or removed at the direction of the Governor's Communications Office, the TN.GOV Steering Committee or an agency.

### **III. Accessibility**

#### **A. Section 508**

The U.S. Department of Justice issued an opinion in September 1996 stating that the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Titles II and III require entities under the ADA to provide effective communication, regardless of whether they generally communicate through print media, audio media, or computerized media such as the Internet. Covered entities that use the Internet for communications regarding their programs, goods, or services must be prepared to offer those communications via an accessible medium.

Accessible Web design also provides benefits to those beyond the community using assistive technology. It provides benefit to users with text-based browsers, low-end processors, slow modem connections, or users who do not have state-of-the-art computer equipment. It also allows for easier access to the Internet via technologies such as Internet-enabled phones or personal digital assistants.

Consequently, executive branch agency Web sites shall take reasonable steps to develop Web sites that serve the largest possible audience. Agency Web page developers, designers, programmers, and content providers shall become familiar with the guidelines for achieving Web accessibility and apply them to their official State of Tennessee Web sites.

The guidelines for Tennessee's accessibility initiative are the same as those for federal agencies. Section 508 of the Federal Register establishes requirements for electronic and information technology and the federal Access Board has issued the standards to meet those requirements.

#### **B. Flash Usage**

Flash is a proprietary technology from Adobe Systems Inc. It has become a popular tool for providing multimedia content delivered via a web server. However, it does raise some unique challenges with respect to accessibility. Content encapsulated within a Flash file cannot be tested for proper accessibility using the same techniques as an HTML page. This means that web developers must become familiar with a new process for verifying that flash content is accessible.

There are techniques that Adobe recommends for testing flash accessibility. However, they are continually changing along with the flash platform itself and require developers to learn and maintain a separate skills from (X)HTML based accessibility testing.

Therefore, we recommend flash should be used sparingly on state web sites. Developers should treat flash content in the same manner as audio/visual content as described in section 3C.

- Avoid using Flash for navigation. Navigation should be provided in standard XHTML or HTML format.
- Also, avoid encapsulating large amounts of text content in Flash files. If this is deemed necessary then a text alternative should be provided.
- Flash should primarily be used for graphical effects or video that will not affect the usability or accessibility of the page if they are not present.

**C. Audio/Visual Features**

- Provide text transcriptions of all video clips. In accordance with Section 508, § 1194.22, (b) Equivalent alternatives for any multimedia presentation shall be synchronized with the presentation.
- If possible, include captions or text tracts with a description of sounds.
- Provide descriptive passages about speakers and events being shown in video clips.
- Give a written description of any critical information that is contained in audio files contained on your Web site.
- If you link to an audio file, inform the user of the audio file format and file size in kilobytes.

**IV. Other Guidelines**

**A. Links from a TN.GOV Web Site to a non-TN.GOV Web Site**

In the course of providing the best service to the public, the state of Tennessee may provide links to content not controlled by the State of Tennessee. In such cases, the link must meet one of the following criteria:

- Leads to a site owned by the federal government, a state government, or a local government. The extension of the URL (e.g., .org, .com) does not preclude a site from being linked to as long as the site is under the ownership of one of the above entities.
- Link leads to a non-profit or non-partisan organization. The extension of the URL (e.g., .org, .com) does not preclude a site from being linked to as long as the site is under the ownership of the approved entity.
- Link leads to additional information about government services.
- Link leads to a Web site owned by an entity that has a contractual relationship with the state of Tennessee.

No endorsement is intended or made of any link, product, service, or information either by its inclusion or exclusion from the state of Tennessee Web site. TN.GOV is not responsible for the content of Web sites not controlled by the State of Tennessee, nor does the State's Privacy Statement apply to sites other than TN.GOV.

**B. Advertising**

Outside advertising on state Web pages is prohibited.

C. **Obsolete Pages**

Any obsolete pages should be archived or removed from the state server to save space. All links to obsolete pages should be removed from state agency Web sites.

D. **Copying and Use of Info by Web Site Owners Linking to State Sites**

A state agency may not charge a fee to access, use or reproduce information on its Web site or to link to information on its Web site, unless specifically authorized to do so by the Tennessee Legislature. To protect the intellectual property of state agencies, copied information must reflect the copyright, trademark, service mark or other intellectual property rights of the state agency whose protected information is being used by the site owner.

**V. Tips for Managing Content**

A. **Current Content**

Regularly delete or archive content that is obsolete or not required by law or regulation.

B. **Audience-Driven Content**

Write and organize the site from the citizen's point of view, keeping in mind what they need to find.

C. **Content for General Public**

Keep the site in easily understood terms. Avoid use of acronyms, jargon, etc.

D. **Plain Language**

Write in easy-to-understand language to reach broad audiences.

E. **Editorial Review**

Regularly review the home page and other main pages to ensure content is timely and relevant.

F. **Online Surveys and Customer Satisfaction**

Implement online surveys to ensure Web layout and content are meeting customers' needs. Also incorporate feedback from customers through other avenues to maintain a meaningful site. When coding surveys, make sure the subject line indicates it is feedback for your departmental Website.

G. **Broken Links**

Regularly check site for broken links. Remove or correct all broken or outdated links.

H. **Meta Tags for: Language, Title and Description**

Each page should specify the language and have <title> and <meta name="description"> tags:

**<html lang="en">** Simply adding **lang="en"** inside the **<html>** tag declares the natural language of the document, which assists search engines and speech synthesizers in reading the page. The "en" signifies English, whereas pages in Spanish would have **<html lang="es">**.

**<title>** This is the text on the title bar of the Web browser, which should match the topic of the page. For example, a general information page may be called "General Information." However, when taken out of context (as in a list of search results) the user would not know whose General Information it was. A more descriptive title would be "General Information - Department of XX." All pages of a site should not have the same title, such as only the agency name.

**<meta name="description" content="...">** This is the summary that is displayed when a page comes up in a search results list. The listing shows pages that match the search and a summary of each page. It should be a sentence or two about what the user will find on the page.

## V. Resources

- Photographic Services  
(615) 741-5487
- Department of General Services - Graphic Arts Division  
651-741-8187 or 615-741-8188
- Department of Economic & Community Development - Creative Services Group  
(615) 532-9831
- Plain Language: <http://plainlanguage.GOV/>
- Web Statistics for Your Agency  
Please see the state intranet's Help Section
- Additional tools needed to comply with this policy can be found at:  
<http://www.tennessee.GOV/guidelines>